

## Book of Colossians - Colossians 3:18-4:18

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### Colossians 3:18-4:18 <sup>2</sup>

#### Recommended Resource

In this week's passage Paul sets forth roles within the family and workplace. Of these relationships, none is perhaps more misunderstood in our day than the role distinctions between a husband and wife. Feminism, in its well-meaning quest to alleviate the abuse and neglect of women, has overstepped the purpose of God in creating unique differences between the sexes. Radical feminism seeks to erase all distinctions between man and woman, husband and wife and has found advocates within evangelical Christianity who misuse passages (such as Col. 3:11) out of context to argue that all roles, including that of pastor/elder, are open for women to fill equally with men. This is a distortion of the full teaching of scripture. As Satan aptly demonstrated, the most dangerous lie is a partial truth. Those who promote "there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28) as denoting the erasure of all role distinctions are misrepresenting the full counsel of God.

For additional background and discussion concerning the teaching of scripture concerning the role distinctions between men and women, I recommend the book **Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism** edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. This book is also available online in HTML <<http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/cbmw/rbmw/>> and Adobe Acrobat format <<http://www.cbmw.org/rbmw/>>.

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2 New King James Bible. TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982.

Serving Others as Unto the Lord

Col 3:18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Col 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

Col 3:21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Col 3:22 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

Col 3:23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

Col 3:24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

Col 3:25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Col 4:1 Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

- ◆ **Equality vs. roles** - Scripture indicates that there are no distinctions in Christ (Ga 3:28; Col 3:11). Does this mean that there are no longer role distinctions among those who are in Christ? If so, how can Paul's words in Ga 3:28, and especially Col. 3:11, be reconciled with the rest of his teaching which indicates that role distinctions remain among the redeemed (1Cor. 11:3; 14:34; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-4:1; 1Ti. 2:12)? The answer lies in examining the full teaching of scripture which indicates that equality and role are not one and the same.
- ◆ **The Trinity as a model** - The members of the Trinity are absolutely equal in their deity. Yet role distinctions remain. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), but the Spirit sends neither the Father or the Son. The Son testifies of Himself (John 8:14, 18), but the Spirit does not testify of Himself. The Spirit always testifies of Jesus (John 15:26; 16:13; Rev. 19:10). After all things have been subjected to the Son, the Son Himself is subject to the Father (1Cor. 11:3; 15:28).
- ◆ **Equal standing but different roles** - Members of the Trinity are all equally and fully God, but fulfill different roles according to God's will! Likewise Christians have absolutely equal standing in Christ. In regard to value before God and access to God and salvation, there are absolutely no distinctions among the redeemed. Yet role distinctions remain in accordance with God's design and will.
- ◆ **Role distinctions provide effectiveness** - Role distinctions are not arbitrary, but are designed to reflect divinely created distinctions which, in turn, evidence greater efficiency and joy when we take care to walk in them. When we live in contradiction to God's intended roles, we can often "make it work," but the results will be below par. It is like using a wrench to pound a nail. It gets the job

done, but the result is painfully slow and both the nail and wrench are likely to suffer damage in the process.

- ◆ **Role distinctions provide clarity** - It is no accident that there is only one captain on a ship. In times of adversity and danger, as in the military, it is extremely important to have clarity of authority and roles. Without this, you are fighting a conflict on two fronts: against the external danger, and among your internal unit. This is the case in many families today where effectiveness combating the external enemy is compromised by 'friendly fire' within the family. It is no accident that successful nations have a well-established hierarchy within tactical organizations.
- ◆ **Roles work together** - The idea behind differences in role is that of synergy, that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Like a well-oiled machine, each part is designed to do a particular job well. Together, the parts 'make music.' When several parts all try to do the same job, the overall mechanism suffers. This is Paul's theme concerning spiritual gifts (unity in diversity), 1Cor. 12:4-27. Differences between roles provide support for one another. For example, on a bombing run the captain steers the plane while the navigator devotes full attention to location and course while the bomber sites and releases the ordnance. If any one of the individuals neglected their post, the mission will fail. Such is the state in many families today. 'Do it My way', says the Lord, 'And you'll be blessed!'
- ◆ **Submitting and loving** - A divine hierarchy requires divine glue - love (Eph. 5:25, 28-29; Col. 3:14, 19). Why is it that many Christian women reject this teaching of scripture? Would it be disadvantageous and difficult to submit to one who you were convinced had your best interest in mind? Is not this a primary motivating factor behind the submission of all believer's to the will of God? Could it be that we men abuse our God-given role by emphasizing the submission of the woman while side-stepping our supreme responsibility to evidence Christ-like love toward our wives (Eph. 5:25, 32)? Are our wives convinced by the hard evidence that the submission we expect serves our self interest rather than the preservation, encouragement, and edification which Biblical love entails, which we are commanded toward our wives? What is Christ-like love? Selfless love. True love is defined by lack of serving self (1Cor. 13:4-7).
- ◆ **Responsibility begins at the top** - In the same way that Adam bears responsibility for the Fall (Rom. 5:12) even though it was Eve who led the way (Gen. 3:12; 1Ti. 2:14), the man is head of the household, but under Christ (1Cor. 11:3). The man is "head of the woman" but along with that goes greater responsibility. As men, we will never have true Biblical authority (respect) unless we ourselves are under authority (Mtt. 8:9; Luke 7:8) - the authority of Christ! As men, we are the spiritual leaders. What does it mean to be a Biblical leader? To show the way or take the initiative. Jesus demonstrated this when He washed His disciple's feet (John 13:5, 14). So it must be with husbands: we can never expect Biblical submission from our wife until we first demonstrate Biblical love for our wife. We can call for it, demand it, point to the Scriptures, but we will never truly experience it

without a demonstration of Biblical love from our side.

- ◆ **Wives submit** - hupotasso (2<sup>nd</sup> person plural, present, passive, imperative) from hupo (under) and tasso (to place or arrange in order or at a station or position). The combination is a **Greek military term meaning "to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader"**. In non-military use, it was "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden".<sup>3</sup> This is a continual activity (present tense): "be continually submitting", just as is agapate (love) on the part of the husbands in the following verse. Both are in the imperative mood - Paul is commanding these behaviors because they do not come naturally and require effort! The "old man," as we saw last week (Col. 3:5-9) does not have "submit" in his vocabulary!

The submission of wives to their husbands is a reflection of God's created order and reflects their divinely different roles (Gen. 3:16; Isa. 3:12; 1Cor. 14:34-37; 1Ti. 2:12-14; Tit. 2:5; 1Pe. 3:3-6). This is the pattern established by God (Gen. 2:20-24; Rom. 5:8; 1Jn. 4:9).

One such distinction is the role of pastor/elder which is reserved for men. Item #19 in the Doctrines Camano Chapel Holds to be True states: **We believe: God has called men to the role of leadership as pastors of the church, (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9), and that the office of pastor-teacher is reserved only for a man. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are men designated as elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor teachers); These leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership. The male elders are to be the official voice of the doctrine of the church and are held responsible by God and the church for how they live and what they teach. (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22; 4:11; Col. 1:18; 1 Tim. 2:12-3:7; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; Heb. 13:7,17; 1 Pet. 5:1-5)**

- ◆ **bitterness** - It is impossible to love where bitterness prevails. It is impossible to be bitter where love prevails. This is one reason we are told to pray for our enemies. Prayer entails love. Love dissolves bitterness in that our focus turns from enmity to edification. From destruction and judgment to restoration.
- ◆ **eyeservice, as men-pleasers** - God is calling for more than an external show of obedience. As always, God is looking at our heart, our internal motivation which is the seat of sin. We can conform externally, but internally we may be a seething pot about to boil over. [Example of child who is "sitting down on the outside yet standing up on the inside."]
- ◆ **unto the Lord** - the motivation for all true Christian conduct is service of the Lord. Paul tells wives

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3 Strong, James. The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order. electronic ed. Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996.

to "submit... as is fitting in the Lord." Children are to "obey... for this is well pleasing to the Lord." Bondservants are to "obey... fearing God." Paul tells them they have two masters: one "in the flesh" and one in the spirit (God). Masters are told to "give what is just and fair... knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." The theme throughout is captured in by the words, "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.." (Col. 3:23).

- ♦ **the Christian in the workplace** - From the what is said to the bondservants ("obey... in sincerity of heart") and their masters ("give your bondservants what is just and fair"), we can infer the conditions of a true Christian workplace. The employer is blessing the employees who are, in turn, blessing the employer. Each one is motivated as 'unto the Lord.' To often, in today's Christianity, we talk about blessing our employer, but do we work and demonstrate a greater commitment to the blessing of our employer than secular colleagues?

### Our Continuing Labor

**Col 4:2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;**

**Col 4:3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,**

**Col 4:4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.**

**Col 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward those [who are] outside, redeeming the time.**

**Col 4:6 [Let] your speech always [be] with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.**

- ♦ **open to us a door** - Paul recognizes evangelism as a spiritual work. it is God who opens doors for evangelism to go forth (Acts 14:27; 1Cor. 16:9; 2Cor. 2:12; Rev. 3:8).
- ♦ **continue earnestly** - proskartereo (from kartereo - to "endure" or be "steadfast"). Prayer requires endurance and steadfastness. Why? Because there is opposition. Seeming lack of results (or delay in answer). The tiring of our flesh. Yet this work we do is spiritual and our weapons are not carnal but spiritual (2Cor. 10:4) and mighty. We cannot do spiritual work with carnal weapons, ideas, programs, or tools!! We will be busy, even working hard, but the results will not be according to God.
- ♦ **vigilant** - gregoreuo (watch, be vigilant, pay attention to) from egeiro (to raise up, as in arousing one's self from sleep).
- ♦ **mystery** - See [notes on Col. 1:26-27](#). The simplicity of the mystery of Christ is in stark contrast to the hidden knowledge (gnosis) of the Gnostics which does not lead toward, but away from God.
- ♦ **seasoned with salt** - Just as salt not only flavors, but prevents corruption, the Christian's speech should act not only as a blessing to others, but as a purifying influence within the decaying society of

the world.<sup>4</sup>

- ◆ **walk in wisdom** - Our innocence is to be related to our actions not naivety of understanding. Jesus said, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." (Mt 10:16). See also Rom. 16:19.
- ◆ **how you ought to answer** - But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always [be] ready to [give] a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; (1Pe 3:15). This same theme of being the seasoning of salt and redeeming the time appears in Eph. 5:11-18.
- ◆ **redeeming the time** - The time we are to redeem includes that which was lost when we ourselves once walked among the unsaved (Col. 2:7) and failed to serve God.

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4 MacArthur, John Jr. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed., Col 4:6. Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997.

Final Greetings And Instruction

Col 4:7 Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.

Col 4:8 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts,

Col 4:9 with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is [one] of you. They will make known to you all things which [are happening] here.

Col 4:10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),

Col 4:11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These [are my] only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is [one] of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Col 4:13 For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.

Col 4:14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.

Col 4:15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that [is] in his house.

Col 4:16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

Col 4:17 And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

Col 4:18 This salutation by my own hand--Paul. Remember my chains. Grace [be] with you. Amen.

- ♦ **Tychicus** - He was one of the Gentile converts Paul took to Jerusalem as a representative of the Gentile churches ( Acts 20:4 ). He was a reliable companion of Paul and a capable leader, since he was considered as a replacement for Titus and Timothy on separate occasions ( 2 Tim. 4:12 ; Titus 3:12 ). He had the responsibility to deliver Paul's letters to the Colossians, the Ephesians ( Eph. 6:21 ), and Philemon ( v. 9 ).<sup>5</sup>

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5 MacArthur, John Jr. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed., Col 4:7. Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997.

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- ◆ **Onesimus... one of you** - The runaway slave whose return to his master was the basis for Paul's letter to Philemon. The instructions concerning a slave's service of his master and his treatment by his master are particularly pointed in that Onesimus was returning to his master Philemon, a member of the church at Colossae. Onesimus had fled as a nonbeliever, but was returning as a believer (Phm 10) and was now "one of you."<sup>6</sup>
- ◆ **Aristarchus** - The Greek name of a Jewish (cf. Col. 4:11) native of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4; 27:2). One of Paul's companions who was seized by a mob in Ephesus (Acts 19:29) and also accompanied Paul on his trip to Jerusalem and his voyage to Rome (Acts 27:4).
- ◆ **Mark** - John Mark, who Paul and Barnabas parted ways over (Acts 15:39). He was a companion on Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 12:25). He was later Peter's associate ("my son," 1 Peter 5:13; cf. Acts 12:12-13). Though Mark deserted Paul on the first missionary journey (Acts 15:37-39), Paul here commended him (cf. Phil. 24), as he did later (2 Tim 4:11).<sup>7</sup>
- ◆ **Luke** - The author of Luke and Acts who was with Paul in Rome at the time. Since the only men with Paul who were mentioned to be "of the circumcision" were Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus (Justus), Luke may have been a Gentile.<sup>8</sup>
- ◆ **the epistle from Laodicea** - A separate letter from Paul, usually identified as the epistle to the Ephesians. The oldest manuscripts of Ephesians do not contain the words "in Ephesus," indicating

6 Philemon also owned at least one slave, a man named Onesimus (literally "useful"; a common name for slaves). Onesimus was not a believer at the time he stole some money (v. 18) from Philemon and ran away. Like countless thousands of other runaway slaves, Onesimus fled to Rome, seeking to lose himself in the Imperial capital's teeming and nondescript slave population. Through circumstances not recorded in Scripture, Onesimus met Paul in Rome and became a Christian. MacArthur, John Jr. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed., Phm 1. Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997.

7 Walvoord, John F., Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, Col 4:10. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985.

8 Lu 4:33; Lu 8:2; Ac 21:15-18; Ro 3:1-2; Col 4:11; Col 4:14 "It is practically certain that Luke was a Gentile... Eusebius speaks of 'Luke being by birth of those from Antioch.' Jerome plainly speaks of 'Luke the physician of Antioch.... It is worthy of note, also, that Luke characterizes demons as 'unclean,' or 'wicked' (Lu 4:33; Lu 8:2), because Gentiles believed in good demons, whereas, to Jews, all demons were evil." [Graham W. Scroggie, A Guide To The Gospels (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1948, 1995), pp. 334-335, 339]. "Luke was of Gentile origin. This is inferred from the fact that he is not reckoned among those 'who are from the circumcision' (Col 4:11 cf. Col 4:14)... Luke was with Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem and seems to have been an eyewitness to Paul's arrest at the Temple as recorded in Ac 21:1-40. ... The point is that when the Jews accused Paul of polluting the Temple by bringing Gentiles therein, why did they only allude to Trophimus? Why did they not include Luke who was also with Paul in the streets of Jerusalem (Ac 21:15-18, e.g., 'we', 'us')?" [Merrill F. Unger, R. K. Harrison and Howard Frederic Vos, New Unger's Bible Dictionary (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988) s.v. Luke] But see Floyd Nolen Jones, Chronology Of The Old Testament (Woodlands, TX: KingsWord Press, 1999), p18n3 for reasons Col 4:11, 14 may be inconclusive.

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that in all likelihood it was a circular letter intended for several churches in the region. Tychicus may have delivered Ephesians to the church at Laodicea first.<sup>9</sup>

- ◆ **church that is in his house** - Believer's gathered initially in private homes, as they do in many areas even today (Rom. 16:5 ; 1Cor. 16:19 ; Phm. 2 ).
- ◆ **take heed** - Although this warning is given to Archippus, it applies to all of us as believers. We have received a ministry (diakonia - the root word for 'deacon' which indicates service to others). This ministry is from the Lord. Our participation is vital in order that we may fulfill it (bring it to completion or maturity). Paul gave similar instructions to Timothy (2Ti. 4:5).
- ◆ by my own hand - Paul's epistles were generally the work of an amanuensis, which he then signed (1Co 16:21; Ga 6:11; Col 4:18; 2Th 3:17; Phm 1:19). Some believe that poor eyesight (Gal. 4:15; 6:11) may have been related to the "thorn in the flesh" he mentioned (2Cor. 12:7) and a lasting result of the revelation of Christ on the road to Damascus (Ac 9:8, Ac 9:18).

### Summary - High Points of Colossians

- ◆ **Christ Alone** - True Godly Wisdom and Christian understanding is found in nothing but Christ (Col. 1:9; Col. 2:3).
- ◆ **Christ is God** - Christ is fully God (Col. 1:15-19; 2:9).
- ◆ **Reconciled by Christ** - Believers are reconciled by Christ's blood which was shed on the cross (Col. 1:14, 20-22; Col. 2:11-14).
- ◆ **Mystery of Christ** - The Mystery of Christ, the indwelling of Christ in the believer (forming 'one new man' the body of Christ in which Gentile has parity with Jew) was a new revelation given to Paul (Eph. 3:4-9; Col. 1:25-27).
- ◆ **Avoid Distractions** - Many are the distractions and substitutes for the simplicity and completeness to be found in Christ. We are to avoid worldly philosophy (Col. 2:8); **legalism** (Col. 2:16-17, 20-22); **worship of angels** (Col. 2:18); **false humility** and neglect of the body (asceticism, Col. 2:18, 23); **self-imposed religion** with the appearance of wisdom (Col. 2:23). All of these are distractions which lead away from Christ and His finished work on our behalf.
- ◆ **We Died and Were Raised Anew** - Believers are to put off the old man, who died with Christ, and put on the new man, raised to newness of life with Christ (Col. 3:1-11). The new man is characterized by selflessness and bound to other believers by love (Col. 3:12-16).
- ◆ **Equality within God-ordained Roles** - Every believer stands equal before the cross (Col. 3:11). This equality in value and standing does not negate God-ordained differences in role (Col. 3:18-4:1). This absolute equality in value within the framework of existing role differences is perfectly illustrated in the return of Onesimus, the runaway slave of Philemon (Col. 4:9; Phm 10).

9 MacArthur, John Jr. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed., Col 4:16. Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997.

- ◆ **We Work for the Lord** - Believers are to be motivated in all they do as if directly serving the Lord (Col. 3:23).
- ◆ **Spiritual Work Requires Spiritual Tools** - Our spiritual work requires the use of spiritual tools. We are to earnestly continue in prayer and walk in Godly (not worldly) wisdom (Col. 4:2-6).